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HB5673- Support

Good morning Senator Fonfara, Representative Horn, and the distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. I'm Colena Sesanker, I live in Hartford and I teach at Gateway Community College in New Haven. My union is the 4Cs and we are members of the Recovery For All Coalition. I am testifying in strong support of House Bill 5673: An Act Concerning The Reformation Of Certain Taxes And Tax Equity.

As a Community College educator, I see up close that the greatest challenges to my students' success are found, most often, outside of the classroom. So many of my students come from households where many have to band together just to make ends meet- where childcare, healthcare, transportation, and the cost of food and housing pose almost insurmountable obstacles to the opportunity to invest the time that might open an avenue to a different life with less precarity.

In the State Colleges and Universities, we educate the workers who will go on to make the state run. Corporations, ought to help make the places their workers live places where they can thrive, raise families, and aspire to better things but corporations, by their nature, have no moral imperative other than profit. It is up to us to define what makes a good neighbor in the community that is Connecticut. This bill proposes to raise the corporate tax, hire more DRS workers to collect taxes owed by those who can most expertly avoid paying what they owe, and to hire Dept of Labor workers to investigate wage theft.

Connecticut doesn't often feel like a community-- we often hear of the 'two Connecticuts'—which is to say, the state's wealth gap fractures any semblance of real community. This is one of the most unequal states in the country and the COVID pandemic from which many of us are still recovering in many ways exacerbated the gap between rich and poor. Families who need every dollar they make for survival struggled harder and harder to make it, all the while giving back to the community about 25% of what they earned. Meanwhile, those who already had more than they would need to live well for several generations contributed only about 6%.

What is proposed in this bill is that we ask those who can contribute without a change to their standard of living to do so to provide a safety net for those who are just one illness, one accident, one layoff away from the devastation of multiple generations of their families; to ensure adequate education, mental health services, and other services that make it possible for them to work toward more. For many, changing that situation is a series of uphill battles that end in a slide right back down again. Making the EITC permanent, expanding the child tax credit, doubling the property tax credit and raising revenue for other services have the potential for making that hurdle a little less steep.

The elements of tax relief for seniors in this bill may also make it possible that more of us might be able to have our parents and grandparents stick around in a state where so many seniors have to leave their beloved homes and the communities they helped build when they get older.

Austerity after the Great Recession of 2008 delayed our recovery. Let's not make the same mistake this time.

Thank you for listening and for considering these reforms.